

RUSSIAN WOMEN IN THE BUILDING OF SOCIALISM

By Anna Razumova

INTRODUCTION

We are publishing this pamphlet, written by a Russian working-woman for International Women's Day, as a document of the victorious struggle which the men and women workers are carrying on for the complete realisation of Socialism in the only workers' state, the Soviet Union.

Why is it so important for the working-class women of England to learn about the triumphant co-operation of their Russian sister workers in the building up of *Socialism*?

The Congress of the British Communist Party declared that work among women and the youth has now taken on a new significance, based upon new economic conditions. For while the process of rationalisation throws more and more workers on to the streets, every day and every hour increasing the army of unemployed, it is the woman, whose labour power is cheap in capitalist countries, who is to an increasing extent taking the place of the male worker. The married woman is forced, because of her husband's unemployment, to go into the factory or to take other work. And when that happens, what kind of care do the children get? And what does it mean for the mother, struggling under the double burden of earning a living and keeping house – cooking, mending, cleaning and nursing when she is already tired out?

Is it any wonder that under these conditions British women hate their work? How should they know that everything can be different – that the order of things which they know must be turned upside down to put it straight? She is forced to work in a factory; she does not care about the factory, she does not care about capitalist business, of which she knows and understands nothing but that it exploits her and crushes out her life.

What does she know of this business, of the figures and facts which are deliberately withheld from the understanding of those whom it should most directly concern – the workers?

How different it is in the Soviet Union!

In this pamphlet we can read what a Russian working woman has to tell us about Soviet Russia's Five-Year Plan. Figures mean something different to this woman, who has helped to put them together, who works as an equal – getting the same wages as men – in putting them into practice and making them a reality.

How simply does this free woman of Soviet Russia speak of equal wages, almost unheard of, almost impossible in capitalist countries! How could the English capitalists “reduce the costs of production,” if not by dismissing men and taking on women at lower rates? In the workers' state, on the other hand, the fact that women also work means that hours of labour are reduced and that real wages rise. This explains the joy which flows, like a warm stream of new life, through this pamphlet written by a woman – joy in being able to take part in this great work of construction, in surpassing the men in Socialist competition, in putting forth all the forces which were formerly crushed back. She is free from all worry about her children; the preparation of meals and all the duties of the housewife are provided for; nothing stands in her way.

True, the struggle is still a hard one. The workers in capitalist countries must never forget the heritage which the Russian revolution took over from savage Tsarism. At every success won in the Soviet Union they must remember what such a success means in a country with such a legacy, as compared with the technically advanced capitalist countries. Every figure, even if at the beginning it falls short of the corresponding figure for capitalist countries, if rightly understood is as important to other workers as it is to the workers and peasants of the Soviet Union themselves, whose energies are directed towards making each figure in the production tables come true.

With the living picture of the Five-Year plan given in this pamphlet, the working women in capitalist countries will also understand the real meaning of this emancipation of woman: this complete transformation of her daily life, this change from a “home” which never really existed to a productive life. And they will do everything in their power, side by side with the men workers, not only to protect such a country from the approaching war, but also to win for themselves a workers' country such as that which the Russian women workers and peasants won by fighting shoulder to shoulder with their menfolk; and which to-day they are still ready to protect with their lives against the attacks of the capitalist world.

RUSSIAN WOMEN IN THE BUILDING OF SOCIALISM

Figures Which Every Working Woman Should Know

The Revolution of November, 1917, which set free the working class and the peasantry of Russia, above all brought freedom to the *women* workers and peasants: gave them full and complete equality with men. But it is not only the revolution that has profoundly influenced the life of the working woman : it is also all the creative work of the proletariat, which has arisen and developed on the soil of the proletarian revolution, that has led her continuously from one stage of development to a higher one. Every step taken in the realisation of Socialism means at the same time an advance in the life of women workers and peasants. This is particularly true of the period during which the gigantic work of Socialist construction, the Five-Year Plan, is being achieved. The Five-Year Plan determines the whole life of the country, its entire development in town and village.

It is the task of the Five-Year Plan to translate into reality the demand which Lenin made, that Soviet Russia should "overtake and surpass the whole capitalist world, Europe and America."

If we are to overtake Europe and America, and leave them behind, we have to do more than re-establish the old industry. We must build new factories and works on the latest technical lines. If we can industrialise Soviet Russia, if we can build up heavy industry – which means in the first place machines and tools for developing agriculture – it will be possible to transform a backward agrarian country, with little industry, into an industrial country with well-developed agriculture. It will mean a complete change in agriculture. Its old, unproductive methods will be replaced by tractors and new machines. The large areas of land now lying fallow must be cultivated. If this technical revolution is accomplished in the village, it will be possible to build up Socialism in the country as in the town, to change the scattered, backward, individual peasant economy into efficient collective economy.

All this, however, requires a gigantic exertion of forces, a tremendous expenditure of energy and money; for the change that we want to bring about can only be made by breaking down the old forms and traditions, by overcoming the dullness, the backwardness, the lack of culture among the peasant population, by fighting against the resistance of the class enemy in the village – the rich peasants, *kulaks*, as they are called.

Let us look for a moment at the contrast between what is going on to-day in the capitalist countries of Europe and America and what is taking place in the Soviet Union. In Europe and America the economic plans of the capitalists and the state are directed towards enriching a diminishing minority at the expense of the workers. As a consequence of over-production, it is becoming ever more difficult to sell what is produced. Unemployment is growing to an appalling extent. The cost of living is continually increasing because of tariffs and higher prices – which means that real wages (i.e., what can be bought with the wages) are falling – while the hours of labour are being lengthened. The standard of life of the working class as a whole is being lowered.

But in the Soviet Union, as the plan of Socialist construction is gradually fulfilled, the condition of the working class is constantly improving. Unemployment is rapidly diminishing, because as fast as production increases, the market (i.e., people who want to buy the goods) increases, too. Wages are rising; hours of work decreasing; the working week being made shorter; the welfare and the standard of life of the working class and the peasantry improving all round, leading to a higher level of culture.

The first year of the Five-Year Plan has given the Russian worker the five-day week – four days work and one day of rest; the seven-hour instead of the eight-hour day; improvements in working conditions because of the introduction of the most modern machinery; improved labour protection; and the establishment of all kinds of facilities which enables the woman worker, without neglecting her home, to work in the factory and devote herself to public life.

We will let the figures speak for themselves.

For the purpose of carrying out the plan the state, during the five years covered by the plan, will invest more than 64.6 milliard rubles (£6,500,000,000), which is double the amount invested in the previous five years. Of this total, 16.4 milliards will go into industry, 3.1 milliards for electrification, 10 milliards for transport and 23.2 milliards for agriculture.

Tremendous building works are arising, such as the huge power station *Dnieperstroï*, which is called a "combine," because it is both an electric power station (beginning with 330,000 kilowatts) and also includes most important industrial works; the Volga-Don canal, the Turkestan-Siberia railway, the great tractor factories with an annual production of thousands of tractors. (The Five-Year Plan

provided for an annual production of 100,000 tractors, but this figure has been passed; it has grown into 200,000 or 300,000.) The new factories and works will make it possible for the U.S.S.R. to develop independently of the capitalist states, to utilise the gold reserves of the country for internal needs instead of expending them to buy machinery abroad. They will make it certain that Socialism is built up in the Soviet Union, despite all the blockades, the slander and hostile acts of the capitalist world. They will make it possible for the U.S.S.R. to develop to such an extent that the annual increase in production amounts to 20 per cent (actually it is already 32 per cent.), while the corresponding figure for capitalist countries is 5 per cent.

Let us follow the development in electrification, the production of pig iron and fuel, the chemical industry and agriculture mapped out in the Five-Year Plan. This will give us a closer view of the tremendous rate at which construction is taking place.

Electrification first:

At the end of the five years the U.S.S.R. will have surpassed Germany in electrification. It has already far outstripped what was done in Tsarist Russia (2.1 milliard kilowatt-hours as against 1.9 milliard in 1913).

Now for coal: At the end of the five years the U.S.S.R. will have an output of 75 million tons. This means that France will be behind Russia in the matter of coal production.

At the end of the five years about ten million tons of pig iron will be produced. With this figure the U.S.S.R. will have surpassed not only France but England as well.

And these three industries are the most important of all, determining the development of the entire national economy. Electrification, fuel and metallurgy – in these spheres the U.S.S.R. will have won first place among a number of great European states. The progress in these basic industries is also helping agriculture to take a great leap forward. In this tremendous country, which covers about one-sixth of the earth's land surface, whose soil contains untold wealth, there were in the past great difficulties in procuring grain and in provisioning the towns. This is explained by the manner in which agriculture was conducted, by the fact that there were 26 million different peasant holdings, each peasant concerned only with his own little bit of land which he worked in an old-fashioned way,

not at all as agricultural science teaches us that the land should be worked.

But as we have seen, under the Five-Year Plan the peasants will be supplied with hundreds of thousands of tractors and machines, with millions of tons of chemical manures; during the five years thousands of collective agricultural concerns will be established. The Five-Year Plan provided originally for 26 million hectares of land to be worked collectively, and for the establishment of numerous soviet farms which, at the end of the five years, should together supply 84 million hundredweight of grain. Yet even these enormous figures have been far surpassed by the living, hurrying reality.

A great change is taking place as a result of the resolute socialist fight against capitalist elements in town and village. Under the leadership of the Communist Party a socialist transformation is taking place in the villages. Beginning by making things difficult for the kulak, the struggle goes on up to the point where the kulaks as a class are entirely eliminated. This struggle is actively supported by the poor peasants and by the middle peasants, who have been freed from the domination of the kulaks. Of course, the capitalists (both in Russia and abroad) howl about the fact that their brothers are no longer permitted to grow rich at the expense of the workers and the poorer peasants. But the results have shown that these tactics were right.

Even now, after one year only of socialist construction, whole districts are merging into collective farms. The village which once lived by the flare of a pine torch – which thought oil lamps a luxury and feared the electric bulb as the devil's eye – is now undergoing electrification.

The electric lamp (the "Lenin lamp," as it is called) has become part of the life and work of the peasant. And the peasant, who at first did not want to hear a word about co-operative farming – who feared every invention as he did fire, is now working hard for the complete collectivisation of the land – is anxious to change his wooden plough and his threshing-flail for the tractor, the threshing machine and the separator.

The New Meaning of Work and the New Means of Work

One great change brought about by this revolution in the industry of town and village has taken place in the relation of the workers towards their labour. This is particularly significant for women

workers and peasants. Once they have been drawn into the processes of production, they recognise the tasks and the great importance of the Five-Year Plan, and do their share in carrying it out with energy and enthusiasm. In the factories and mills they help to increase the productivity of labour and reduce costs. They have been particularly vigorous in contending against absences from work, against a negligent or indifferent attitude towards work, against all workers who have not recognised that they are now working for their own class. They take good care that the industry in which they are working should turn out the best possible in quantity and quality; they feel that they themselves are responsible for the entire industry, for socialist construction as a whole.

They recognise quite clearly that the realisation of the Five-Year Plan demands the mass participation of all the workers of the Soviet Union; that everybody must learn to work in a new way, directing all their energy and all their will to carrying out the plan.

So new methods of work are developing which the plan itself did not take into account in its calculations. Even before the plan was finally ratified, the great wave of *socialist competition* began to spread over the country. Now millions of workers have taken it up. One factory challenges another to a socialist competition: Who will work better? Who will effect a greater reduction in the costs of production?

Who will produce the best goods?

Who will produce the least faulty goods?

Where will absences from work cease first?

Where will the machines stand idle the least time?

These are questions, bound up with the life of the works, that form the subject matter of the different competitions; which are held not only between one factory and another, but also between one department and another; between men as against women workers; workers against peasants; cotton against wool workers. Town even competes against town. They compete as to who will establish better provisions for education, more crèches, kindergartens, dining rooms, clubs, etc.

On 8th April, 1929, the woman textile workers of Moscow, Tver and Ivanovo-Vosnessensk challenged each other to a socialist competition: 60,000 women workers determined to reduce costs of production and to increase the productivity of labour.

The Luberets and Kramator works, which turn out agricultural machinery, have challenged each other to a competition; the largest rubber works, the *Red Giant* and the *Red Triangle*, have done the same; in the coal, the metal and the electrical industries competitions are under way; and other industries are not behind. The peasants, too, are taking an active part, seized to an ever-growing extent by socialist enthusiasm. The Volga district, Northern Caucasus and the Ukraine are competing for first place in the harvest and in collectivisation. The agricultural concerns in Samara have organised a socialist competition between the village of Vladimirovka and the collective farm *Green Grove*; the peasants have undertaken to extend the area under cultivation and the workers to increase productivity and to reduce costs.

Since the first days of socialist competition, the women workers have accomplished real miracles. For example, in the *Proletarka* mills of Tver, the woman worker, Maria Stepanova, who examines the quality of the product, has examined 320 pieces per day instead of her usual 200. Another woman textile worker turned out 954 pieces on the first day of the competition, and 1,027 on the second; her usual output was 750. There are numberless similar examples which could be given. The socialist competition has spread to every corner of the Soviet Union. There is no aspect of public life, however insignificant, which has remained untouched by this tremendous example of mass energy. The idea has even caught on among the militant workers in capitalist countries, who are now competing in the organisation of the revolution: so many new members must be won for the Communist Party, so many new factory cells established by a certain time. Socialist competition has made even the more backward men and women workers of the Soviet Union feel that they are the real masters of industry, who are themselves responsible for their own affairs, their own factory, their own national economy.

The results of this new relation to work were soon apparent. The first year of the plan showed that only four years will be required in order to carry out the plans which it was thought would take five years to execute.

The method of self-criticism – i.e., bringing to light all mistakes and defects – is another factor which has greatly contributed towards the successes gained. Self-criticism sometimes goes so far that all those who have stayed away from work unnecessarily, or

who are careless or indifferent about their work, are publicly re-proved by the other workers who are conscious of their goal, and they are gradually brought to take part in the general work of construction and in the new methods of work.

The capitalist press outside Russia often quotes such criticisms, made by the workers as a means to improve their common work, and tries to show by doing so that things are going badly in Russia. But the enlightened workers and the U.S.S.R. know that they are stronger by reason of collective examination of defects. They are exerting all their strength to increase the rate of socialist construction.

In spite of the clamour of the capitalist world, which maintained that the Five-Year Plan was an impracticable fantasy, in spite of all those who, fearful of difficulties, maintained that the plan was impracticable and the proposed rate of development impossible to achieve, the men and women workers of the Soviet Union have proved that, aided by these new methods of work, the plan can and will be carried out, and in a period shorter by one year than the time proposed.

The New Forms of Life, the New Daily Life

Apart from the more rapid execution of the Five-Year Plan, we have to solve the burning questions of education and the complete transformation of daily life.

The building up of the industries and development of collective farming requires not only improved machinery, tractors, power stations, etc., but also men who are capable of utilising them, drivers, mechanics, electricians, trained and educated persons.

We need men everywhere, we need men for the simplest machines as well as for its management and organisation. But our country is poor in trained workers and technical experts; the twelve years of intense work in training new specialists have not yet fully supplied this deficiency, although in those years we have overcome the worst legacy of Tsarism, illiteracy, which was more prevalent among working women than among men. To overcome this shortage of trained managers and skilled workers in town and country, a plan for abolishing the last remaining illiteracy has been drawn up.

In the last seven years 250,000 women have learnt to read and write, but still, in 1926, only 34.4 per cent of women could read and write. In 1927-28 53.9 per cent of the population of the U.S.S.R.

could read and write; 78.5 per cent of the urban population and 48.3 per cent of the village population. By the end of the Five-Year Plan at least 82 per cent of the population will be literate, 93 per cent in the towns and 79.4 per cent in the villages. But the new scheme aims so to speed up education that «every industrial worker will be literate within one year from now, and the last of illiteracy will have vanished from the country within three years.

The emancipated woman of Russia desires education and knowledge. Being able to read and write, an accomplishment which once seemed to her to be the essence of the desirable, does not satisfy her any longer. After she has learned to read she goes further, and trains herself to be a skilled worker in the factories or in agriculture, to be capable of doing important and responsible work.

In 1929 there were 8,818 women (20 per cent of them from the workshops) attending the various educational institutions of the U.S.S.R. for technical and agricultural training. In the technical high schools there were 4,784 women, 82 per cent of them workers; in the professional schools 4,975, 47 per cent of them children of workers, in the factory schools 7,079 girls, 84 per cent of them children of workers.

The peasant woman, too, is growing more and more anxious to receive education, to attend the workers' colleges, the technical training-centres, the various lecture courses. In 1929, 21 per cent of the women attending high schools were peasants who formerly worked in agriculture in their villages. 32 per cent of the students at the workers' colleges, 28 per cent at the technical training schools, and 27 per cent at the various agricultural courses were peasant girls. Thus we see agricultural experts, doctors and engineers coming forward from the ranks of the women workers and peasants.

Still more astonishing are the figures relating to the women of the east. In 1925 in Turkmenia there were only 25 women who could read and write, and in 1926-27 in the Turkmenian schools 1,084 women were taught to read and write and given a technical training. Every Turkmenian or Uzbek girl at school means a revolution in the life of the east, undermining the influence of the clergy.

But the greatest factor in emancipating the woman is the possibility of combining work outside the home with provision for the duties and cares of the household. This is the effect of the Five-Year Plan on the forms of daily life.

The care of the working mother and her child has from the very first been considered as one of the most important tasks of the soviet state. Soviet Russia can be proud of her network of institutions which free the working woman from the cares of daily life.

As the industries rapidly extend, and women more and more take part in production, these questions assume still greater importance. The rapid growth of female labour requires a corresponding extension of institutions, particularly crèches and kindergartens, which relieve the woman worker of much of the work of the home.



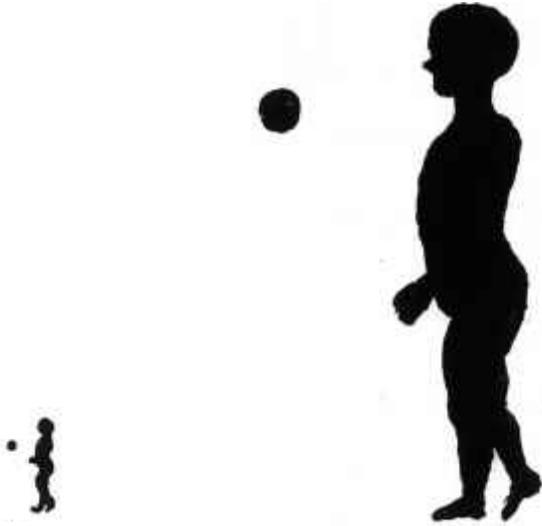
1928 – 34,000

1932-33 – 65,000

*Increase in number of Crèches provided in R.S.F.S.R.
(in the towns)*

The Five-Year Plan provides for a considerable increase in crèches in the R.S.F.S.R. * rising from 34,000 cots in 1928 to 65,000 in 1932-33. Many crèches will be established in the newly- built colonies and old, unsuitable buildings now being used as crèches will be replaced by new, comfortable ones. In the towns a crèche department will be set up, which will allocate crèches to factories, settlements and workshops. Cheap and convenient playrooms and playgrounds will be attached to the dwelling-co-operatives and the larger blocks of flats. The same principles will be applied even more extensively in the new socialist towns which it is planned to build. Everything possible will be done to cheapen the costs of maintaining children in the crèches and kindergartens.

* R.S.F.S.R. – Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic, the largest republic within the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, with about 100 million inhabitants. The U.S.S.R. has 145 millions.



1927-28 – 64,000

1932-33 – 400,000

*Increase in kindergartens in the R.S.F.S.R.
(in the towns)*

It is planned that in the R.S.F.S.R. in 1932-33 400,000 children will be provided for by the kindergartens, and about 1,000,000 by playing grounds (the corresponding figures for 1928-29 were 64,700 and 160,000).

Under the plan particular attention is devoted to women working in collective agriculture. By the end of the five years there will be 1,000 crèches established on the larger collective farms; this means that about half of the large collective farms will have crèches. In addition, under the plan there will be 500 crèches for the labour cooperatives. It is also intended to organise 3,600 summer crèches, which will bring the total by 1932-33 to 9,000 in the R.S.F.S.R. The development of institutions on the collective and soviet farms for children of school age has been planned on a corresponding scale.



1927-28 – 160,000



1932-33 – 1,000,000

*Playing Grounds in the R.S.F.S.R.
(in the towns)*

Apart from the crèches, kindergartens and playing grounds, the working woman and the worker's wife has always the chance of obtaining necessary advice on the care and upbringing of children. In 1927, according to the budget of the Commissariat of Public Health, there were 1,469 such advisory bodies ("mothers' consultations") in the towns; by 1932-33 the number will have increased to 2,692.

All these institutions for child welfare mean a great deal in the life of the working woman. They free her from the necessity of spending all her time at home, cleaning, cooking, and minding the children. While she is at work she can be sure that her child is being well looked after, that it is supervised by trained nurses and teachers, and gets wholesome food at regular meal-times. There are even

children's rooms in the clubs, divided according to age (e.g., one for infants under one year, one for children under school age, etc.). In this way (the parents can take their children with them to the club and can rest, talk or study there without being worried about them. Nearly all clubs have such children's rooms.

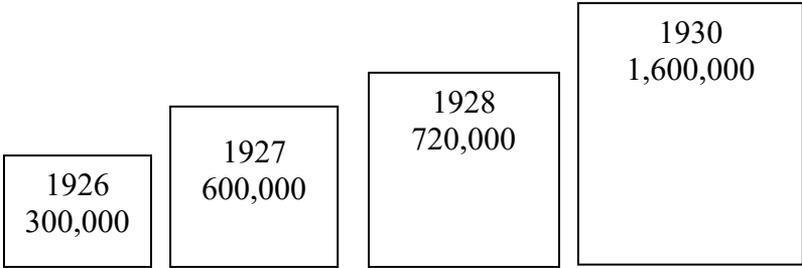
The results achieved in this short time in the collective care of children fully justify the work done. It is enough to point out that the child mortality rate in the period 1913-1926 has fallen by 8.2 per cent. In 1911 in Leningrad the child mortality rate among working-class children was 34 per cent. In 1926 this had fallen to 26.3. For Moscow the corresponding figures were 26.3 and 13.4.

Of equal importance with the facilities for the care of children are the provisions for relieving women from unnecessary housework. This involves the question of communal feeding. Every woman knows how much strength, energy and time is spent in preparing meals for a single family, however modest its requirements may be.

By the system of communal feeding the soviet power is gradually freeing women from the slavery of housework by taking this burden of unproductive work from their shoulders and giving them the time and opportunity to take part in production and to devote their free time to their own cultural needs. The communal laundries are also contributing to the same end.

The Communist Party has succeeded in establishing the conviction that household drudgery and the individual upbringing of children are only relics from the old order of society. As women are freed more and more from the stupefying, petty tasks of household work, they can turn their energies and capacities to other spheres of labour.

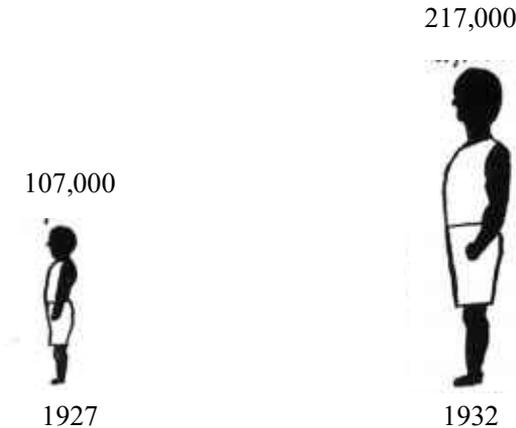
In 1926 we had 627 dining rooms which provided 300,000 meals a day. In 1927 there were 720 providing 420,000 meals. In October, 1928, communal feeding provided meals for 720,000 persons. In the Five-Year Plan it was calculated that by 1932-33 the number of meals supplied daily by communal restaurants will be 2,184,000, and the number of persons whose meals are provided by communal kitchens will be 5,600,000.



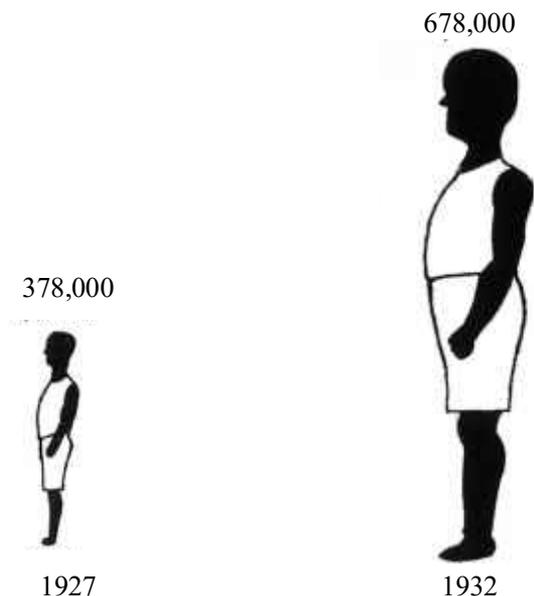
Meals provided in Communal Dining Rooms

However, at the beginning of 1930 daily communal meals already numbered 1,400,000, and so it has been possible to revise the figures. According to the new estimates nearly 20,000,000 will be supplied with meals in the communal restaurants at the end of the five-year period!

These will include several large “factory-kitchens” (i.e., kitchens constructed and run on a very large scale, like factories) fitted out with the most modern equipment, and with clean and attractive dining rooms attached where the cost of dinner will be low enough for the worker's family budget. There will be 4,800 of these kitchens at the end of the five years. In the socialist towns which it is proposed to erect all households will enjoy communal feeding, and there will be ample facilities for collective care of all the children while young and during the schooling period.



Number of children cared for in crèches and kindergartens



*Number of children provided for in homes
in the villages of the R.S.F.S.R.*

The co-operatives have a great amount of work to do in this sphere – work which will be promoted by the growing participation of women. The consumers' co-operatives now include 1,481,600 women in the towns and 1,165,000 women in the villages.

In the villages of the U.S.S.R. which formerly never had a notion of what a crèche or kindergarten is; where, in the first years of the revolution, the peasants were afraid of entrusting their children to these crèches, etc., there were, in 1927, 107,000 children looked after in such institutions. By 1932-33 this figure will have reached 217,000. Children's homes and playing grounds provided for 378,000 children in 1927-28; by 1932-33 this figure will have grown to 678,000.

The uncultured peasant woman who, even when she was seriously ill, denied the necessity of medical attention, who used to allow herself and her children to be treated by "wise women" and ignorant quacks; who, in sickness, placed more hope in God than in the doctor, has, under the soviet regime, at least recognised that it is absolutely necessary to pay attention to her own and her child's health, and to be constantly under medical supervision during preg-

nancy and nursing. In 1927-28 we had 1,469 advisory clinics for pregnant and nursing women; in 1932-33 there will be 2,692 clinics.

The peasant woman, whose child used to be born in an outhouse or in a dirty hut, with the assistance of the local "wise woman," and who thought that such a state of affairs was quite natural because her mother and grandmother had lived in the same way, has now recognised the need for maternity homes where she can receive proper medical attention and care. In 1927-28 there were in the villages 276,000 hospital beds for women; in 1932-33 there will be 365,000 beds.

So the peasant woman, too, will gradually be freed from household cares. The growth in the number of peasants able to read and write, and the improvement in the general cultural level of the villages, is accompanied by a widening in social life. The peasant woman is utilising every opportunity of satisfying her awakening desire for education. She likes to go to the reading room, and spends whole evenings there, learning to read and to write, receiving a political education. From the radio she learns what is taking place in the outside world, for thousands and thousands of miles around. Formerly her horizon did not extend beyond the confines of the village.

It was not only that she was wholly ignorant of the life of workers and peasants in other countries; even the life of the nearest district town seemed to her distant and mysterious. The village reading room has utterly changed the life of the peasant woman. There are not yet enough to satisfy the demands of the peasant women. In 1927-28 we had 21,876 reading rooms supported by the People's Commissariat for Education, and in addition others established by town workers engaged in the villages. By 1932-33 there will be 38,283 reading rooms.

The cultural life of the villages is concentrated in these reading rooms. Teachers, agricultural experts, doctors, party and youth groups – all assemble here. Here is the library, the wireless, the agricultural study circle, the worker correspondents' group, the hygiene study circle, the wall-newspaper, the anti-religious propaganda. It is the keenest competitor of the church, the local priest and the kulaks; within its walls the leaders of the village are trained and developed.

Thus we see how the creative forces of the women workers and peasants are continually growing in the new economic conditions, and leading necessarily towards a new and higher form of daily life.

Higher and Higher

The systematic, energetic work of the Communist Party among women for years past has given us many women workers and peasants capable of leadership, who received their first important practical training at the delegate meetings of women trade unionists. These women are now supporting the great onslaught on the old forms of life.

In this respect it is very interesting to study the discussion on the report of the Moscow Soviet upon its work for the year 1929-30. Housewives and women workers are criticising the soviet not on account of the defects in its work which affect them personally, of whose causes they are well aware and which they consider it is partly their duty to eliminate, but because the struggle against private traders is not sharp enough, because the closing down of churches is postponed, whereas they should be turned into schools and clubs, because the merchants have not been excluded quickly enough from the markets or the kulaks eliminated.

All these crèches, kindergartens, homes and clubs arising in the most remote corners of the Soviet Union require hard and persistent daily work (just as in the factories and mills) which is being accomplished willingly by working women. Their services are given as a matter of course; their names will not appear in the historical documents of socialist construction; they themselves scarcely realise what responsible work it is. They do not fully grasp that they are the architects of the new life.

When they come to meetings they will express themselves for the most part in a clumsy fashion. They do not speak of themselves and their work; but they carry it on, modestly, quickly, obstinately surmounting all the difficulties of construction. Formerly only a few took part; now masses of women are active. There is not a single woman worker who is unwilling to occupy herself with public work; there are fewer and fewer peasant women who are unwilling to take part in the public life of the village.

In the U.S.S.R. we do not discuss whether a married woman can be drawn into production or not, whether she should take part in public life or not. The idea that social work destroys the family and ruins its life has gone beyond discussion. In this connection it is a sign of development, a fact of great importance, that the number of

women trade union members has doubled in the last five years. The figures of the trade union movement in the U.S.S.R. are as follows:

1/10/1926. T.U. membership – 9,541,200, including 2,413,600 women.

1/10/1928. T.U. membership – 10,994,600, including 2,935,700 women.

Agricultural workers, always the more backward section, are also coming into the trade unions in ever-growing numbers. Women land workers, formerly exploited by the kulaks, are gradually finding their way to the trade union with whose help they can then fight and expose the kulaks.

The trade union figures for this group are:

1/10/1926. Number of organised land workers – 1,094,000, including 174,000 women.

1/10/1928. Number of organised land workers – 1,359,000, including 251,000 women.

It is not only the absolute figure of women workers which is growing; according to the Five-Year Plan the percentage of women engaged in industry is to reach 31. In comparison with the pre-war period, there has already been an increase in the proportion of women workers in a number of industries. The following table will make this clear:

Industry.	Percentage of female labour		
	1913	1927-28	1932-33
Glass	19.4	28.3	31.0
Cotton	56.1	60.4	63.1
Wool	41.1	48.8	51.6
Flax and hemp	58.9	63.0	65.7
Cotton manufactures	53.9	63.0	65.7
Graphite	9.1	21.6	24.3
Food	21.4	26.7	29.4
Woodwork	8.2	15.8	18.5
Metals	4.8	9.3	12.0
China and pottery	36.8	39.4	42.1

Equality at the bench, equality in wages, equality in the value of work done – all this is destroying the power of the former “head of the family” which the man has up to now possessed as the chief breadwinner ; while the woman just gave her services and struggled to bring up her children. To-day women have access to every sort of

skilled work and this does away with the cause of inequality in the factory and in the family, where everybody now does his or her share of the work.

The improvement in the skill of female labour, and the advance of women from the labouring to the skilled sphere of work, have decisively changed the position of women. For example, the number of women earning more than sixty rubles per month has increased threefold; the number of women workers earning less than forty rubles per month has decreased by one half.

At the same time we must bear in mind that women are still for the most part unskilled workers, although they get the same wages as men wherever they do the same work, and moreover the wage policy of the U.S.S.R. is directed towards lessening the difference between the wages of the more backward sections of the workers and those of the skilled workers. Nevertheless, in spite of this fact, the real wages of the woman worker in the Soviet Union are higher than those of her sister in England. This is due to the numerous social advantages possessed by women in the Soviet Union – to the low rents, to the fact that food and other goods are much cheaper for the workers than for the non-working elements. Taken as a whole, it is true of the woman as of the man worker, that her standard of life is considerably higher than the life of the suppressed and exploited millions in capitalist countries.

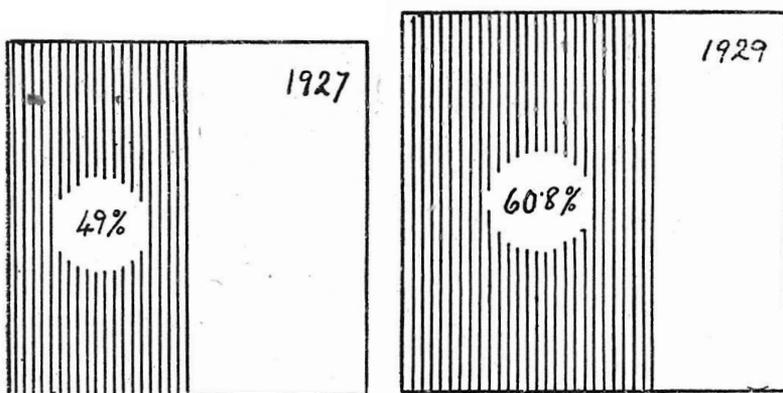
The Five-Year Plan provides for an increase of 72 per cent in wages, to apply both to men and women workers. This indicates the enormous rise in their economic and cultural life which will result.

In all spheres women are pressing forward to take up responsible positions. They are becoming highly skilled mechanics, engineers and architects. There are several dozen women workers who have become factory directors, assistant directors and managing technicians. In Leningrad alone 365 were promoted during one year to administrative work in production. The advance of women is particularly noticeable in the trade unions; 17.5 per cent of the leading trade unionists are women, acting as members of the central committees of the district unions, 19.6 per cent on the bureaus and committees of the sub-districts and 13.8 per cent are members of the central committee of the trade unions. The percentage of women in the wage and arbitration commissions and in the labour protection committees amounts to 21.9 per cent.

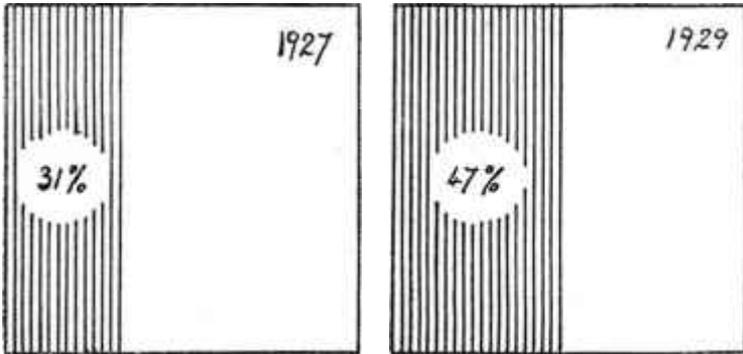
Year by year the number of women taking part in the soviet elections increases; and the growth is much more rapid now than in the first years of the revolution. This is an important and: serious achievement; and still more important is the fact that women are taking a greater and greater part in soviet work and' are to an increasing extent becoming members of the soviets. Specially interesting facts dealing with, this subject have come from the east.

According to the old traditions and religious dogmas, the women of the east were not permitted to appear in the same places as men; they were not considered as human beings, but as things which were the property of the man, who could do what he liked with them. Now they take an equal part as citizens in the work of the soviets, in the management of the economic and public activities of the village. 111,720 of them took part in the soviet elections of 1926-27, of whom 48,429 were elected and 147 chosen as presidents. In Turkmenia in 1929, 20.2 per cent, of those elected were women. In Uzbekistan where, a few years ago, women were still persecuted and killed if they dared to discard the *parandsha* (a black veil of horse-hair covering the face), 25.3 per cent, of the village soviets are composed of women.

In the Towns



On the Land



Percentage of women taking part in elections

Women have won their place in the administration of the state. In this and in work they have shown themselves to be as capable as men of bearing grave responsibilities and carrying out the tasks entrusted to them.

The Architects of Socialism

The ranks of the class-conscious women workers are growing. On July 1st, 1928, out of a membership of 1,317,369 in the Communist Party, 172,107 were women; of these 96,547 or 56.1 per cent, were workers; 54,331 or 31.5 per cent, clerical workers; 21,229 or 12.4 per cent, peasants. In 1927 there were 4,281 women of the east in the party; in 1928 their number had increased to 7,365.

The young women in the Young Communist League and in the trade unions are the new people, the result of the soviet order of society ; brought up and educated in the fire of the revolution.

In July, 1928, the Y.C.L. numbered 2,042,245 members, of whom 449,919 were girls. By April, 1929, the total membership had risen to 2,393,363, including 558,699 girls. More than half-a-million girls, mostly workers and peasants, have grown up in the revolution, freed from prejudices and from the influence of the church; they are trained and cultured – our socialist architects. Many of them are studying and learning in order to put their young energy and strength into the task of socialist construction. All do their share towards it, displaying initiative and developing fresh ideas in the new attitude to labour in the factories and workshops. They are followed by 1,791,575 pioneers – the children of Novem-

ber – who never knew the old days, who have not been exposed to the influence of the old schools and religion, and have grown up entirely under the soviets. The women and the girl Communists march together with their brothers at the head in all socialist construction, leading the workers and carrying them along by their example, while yet acting in the closest association with the mass of women workers and peasants.

In Defence of the Soviet Union

Here, too, woman plays her part, preparing to defend, with life and limb, the "red frontiers," and their zeal grows as the danger of a war of intervention increases. This is not a new fact. During the civil war there were numerous women workers, members of no party, who fought shoulder to shoulder with men; 52 of them received the highest order which the Soviet Union has to bestow, the Order of the Red Flag.

The Red Army is not big enough to take in all the volunteer peasants and workers, and the women, with these others, are organised for the defence of the Soviet Union in the *Osoviakhim*. * Unlike all capitalist military organisations, this body, just like the Red Army, helps to build up socialism, apart from its military duties. They are awakening the enthusiasm and initiative of the masses in town and village for the cause of socialist construction. Its brigades are sent out into the country to help gather in the harvest or do other necessary work. In the Five-Year Plan it is calculated that in 1932 this organisation will have 17 million members, of whom 32 per cent will be women. During the first year of the plan the membership numbered five million, of whom 20 per cent were women.

With socialist competition going full steam ahead, every day sees new proposals for improving methods of work and new suggestions for increasing the activity of all workers in the tasks of construction. "Shock (exemplary) brigades" are formed and frequently the work of the women's brigade has excelled that of the men. They attract the most active and conscious workers, and in many cases there are more women in the mixed brigades than men. In one factory in the Urals, which bears the name of the V.I. Lenin, 763 out of a total personnel

* A voluntary organization whose mission is the strengthening of the Soviet aviation and chemical services.

of 1,725 joined up in the brigades; of these 647 were women and 116 men. Here are some other examples:

	Total Personnel	No. in Brigades	Men	Women
1.	1,713	900	400	500
2.	613	288	62	226
3.	112	84	10	74
4.	700	96	36	60
5.	50	38	12	26

At the present time there are 27,000 *delegate meetings* uniting 800,000 women delegates from the factories and farms. About the extensive and highly important work of these bodies, in drawing wide masses of women into administrative and social activities, developing their sense of responsibility and giving them political training, much has been written already. Their work now, in the period of socialist construction, is penetrated to an extent which grows from day to day by the vigorous and creative spirit of revolutionary competition.

Far beyond Soviet Russia's frontiers rings the news of socialist construction, filling the workers of capitalist countries with courage and strength, with new confidence in the realisation of socialism. They will be ready to protect the fatherland of all workers against threat of war; they will do more – they will organise the revolution in their own countries, build up their own soviet state.

Innumerable rivulets unite into one broad and powerful stream of socialist construction. History is being written, a new history of battles, of heroic deeds. There is one special chapter, devoted to the working women of the Soviet Union.

We shall overcome all difficulties, we shall overtake and pass the countries most technically advanced, we shall build up and establish socialism. And when the new generation, who are unaware of the difficulties we had to face, study the great history of our days, they will read that chapter which is like no other chapter in any history of any country of the world – the chapter that tells the story how the working woman of the Soviet Union helped to build up socialism, how she organised and developed the new life.